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ABSTRACT

This article examines why teachers should be evaluated, how teacher evaluation is perceived, and how teacher evaluation can be approached, focusing on the improvement of teacher competency rather than defining a teacher as "good" or "bad." Since the primary professional activity of a teacher is teaching, the major concern of teacher evaluation is the effectiveness of student learning experiences and the promotion of the professional growth of teachers. The first step in an evaluation scheme is the establishment of objectives that are congruent with the educational goals of the society and the school district; the final step is the determination of the degree to which the objectives have been met. Evaluation, however, is a process, and between the initial and final steps it is necessary to: (1) establish objectives; (2) design activities; (3) determine criteria for validation; (4) implement activities; (5) collect proper data; (6) analyze data; and (7) examine the reasonability, effectiveness, and significance of steps one through four. If the stated objectives have not been met, an overall examination should be done starting with the design of activities. If a teacher is working in conjunction with an evaluator it is important that: (1) the teacher be an active participant throughout the evaluation process; (2) the teacher and evaluator decide together what is evaluated, what criteria should be used, and how information is collected; and (3) they should meet at least three times a year. (DMT)

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TEACHER EVALUATION

By Dr. Philip Saif

I. A Perception

Educational evaluation is concerned with four major areas: program, students, materials used in classrooms, and teachers. Most of what has been published in evaluation deals with programs and students, with some becoming available on materials. Evaluators were shying away from the evaluation of teachers until events of recent years forced them to turn their attention in this direction.

This article is concerned with the following questions:

1. *Why should teachers be evaluated?*
2. *How is evaluation of teachers perceived?*
3. *How can evaluation of teachers be done?*

During the last fifteen years, voices have been raised asking for more accountability in education. Since the economic situation during the period, described as inflation and recession at the same time, has had much to do with demands for accountability, the underlying theme has been "getting the most from the education dollar."

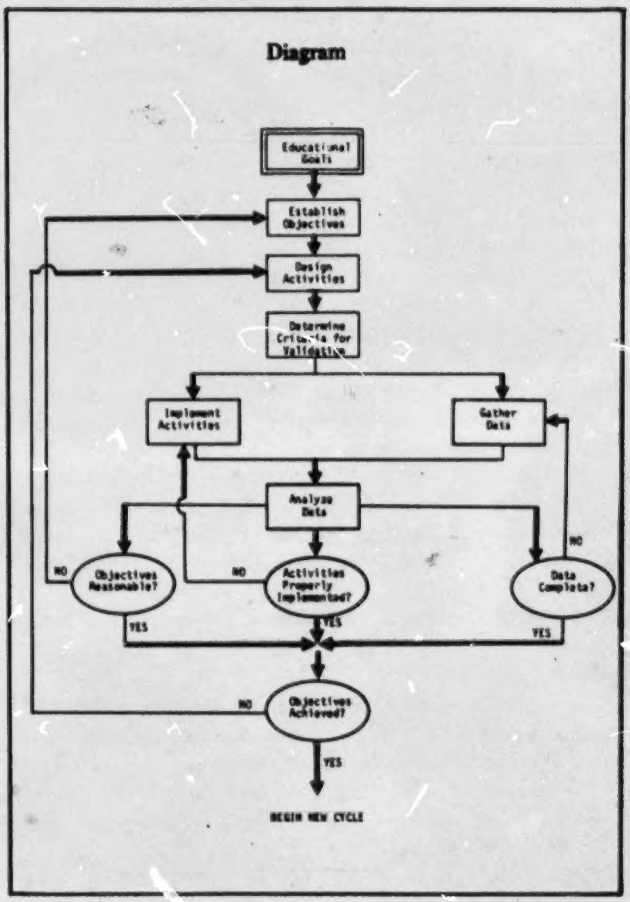
As the trend has become general, many states have passed laws requiring evaluation in education, often specifically identifying teachers as the sector to be evaluated.

Why have lawmakers required evaluation of teachers? Some have answered this question simply by saying "to get rid of 'bad' teachers." Others have seen evaluation as a means of determining salary scales. Educators did not feel comfortable with either answer. They, however, looking at the same question, have given different answers, namely: "to improve student learning" and "to promote the professional growth of teachers." Therefore, the discussion in this article is primarily related to these concepts.

Since the primary professional activity of a teacher is teaching, the major concern of teacher evaluation should be effective student learning experiences. With focus on the improvement of student learning, an evaluation scheme should seek to help *all* teachers do a better job. It does not concentrate on defining "good" versus "bad" teachers, but assumes that each teacher is competent, and that each can improve.

"Good teaching" is too fuzzy a concept to be useful in collecting data for evaluation. One way to refine such a broad concept is through asking questions such as *"Good for what?"* and *"Good for whom?"* Consequently, the first step in the evaluation scheme is to establish objectives that are congruent with the goals of education for the society and the school district; and the final step will be to determine to what degree these objective were met. The diagram shown explains what the necessary steps are between the first and the last steps.

Diagram



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The first three steps – *establish objectives, design activities,* and *determine criteria for validation* – should be done together. Most of the criteria needed will relate to student performance and teacher activities that will lead to student learning. Some related teacher behaviors will probably also be considered: attitudes, values, human relations, and professional growth.

The individual teacher and the evaluator (frequently the evaluator in schools is the supervisor) must work *together* to decide upon the objectives which will form the major part of the teacher's evaluation. The design of activities for the achievement of the stated objectives is also meant to be agreed upon by the teacher and the evaluator together. Activities and criteria need to be expressed and written in precise terms so that there will be no misunderstanding about what is to be done and when various activities take place.

Like the first three steps in the diagram, steps 4 and 5 – *implement activities* and *collect data* – take place at the same time. It is important that the collected data be appropriate to help in determining the degree of meeting the stated objectives. To explain the importance of collecting proper data, the writer mentions the following incident when he was consulted "after the fact." At the end of the year, the principal of a high school found that, although both he and the teacher had stated objectives, designed and implemented activities,....the objectives were not achieved. Examination of the collected data revealed that they had not included the attitude of the teacher towards the course he was teaching. Incidentally, that attitude proved to be negative.

Step 6 – *analyze data* – is a natural extension of steps 4 and 5; at the same time it forms the foundation for the next three steps, in which decisions are made.

Step 7 asks *Are the objectives reasonable?* After performing some (or all) of the activities according to the plan, the evaluator, as well as teacher, can determine whether or not the objectives were realistic. If not, they (the teacher and the evaluator) should go back to Step 1, re-examine and modify or re-write the objectives.

Step 8 asks *Were the activities properly implemented?* If the answer is "no," one must go back to Step 4 to discover what was not properly implemented.

Step 9 asks *Were the data collected significant?* Was enough information gathered and was it the right information? If the data collected do not fulfill the purpose, one must go back to Step 5 to determine other kinds of needed data.

When the three steps (7, 8, and 9) have all been answered "yes," it becomes obvious that Step 10 must ask *Were the objectives achieved?* If the answer is "yes," a new cycle could be initiated. If the answer is "no," an overall examination should be done starting with the design of activities.

The teacher should be an active participant throughout the evaluation process. If information gathered during the evalution process is to be useful to the teacher in making decisions, then the teacher and the evaluator should *decide together* what should be evaluated, what criteria should be used, and how information should be collected. As data are gathered and analyzed, the teacher and the evaluator together can make decisions as to which of the early steps should be re-examined.

Evaluation of teachers, as perceived above, is a way for teachers and evaluators to work together in examining performance so that, together, they can effect changes to improve student learning. When teachers are active participants in an on-going process, evaluation can be a valuable tool in improving the educational outcomes.

In order to put the plan mentioned above into action, the evaluator must meet with the teacher at least three times a year:

1. Initial conference(s) during the early part of the year (September/October) to agree *in writing* upon the objectives, the activities, and methods of validation.
2. Mid-year conference(s) (January/February) to check upon the processes.
3. End-of-year conference(s) (May) to assess the degree of success in reaching each of the objectives.

Various forms could be developed to meet such steps*

II. Are the Objectives Enough?

Whether educators call the system described above as objective-based evaluation or contract or management by objectives, the question will be raised: *Are such objectives enough for the evaluation of a teacher?*

The stress, in the first part of this article, was placed on the outcome. Objectives are geared towards students and what they should learn. What about the teacher? There are other characteristics that should be considered, e.g., accuracy, stability, creativity, etc. How should such characteristics be considered in evaluation of a teacher? How could it be done in a meaningful way? Most teachers are familiar with the check lists which have been shown to be invalid. Some school districts thought of scales. Frequently such scales are of no value to a teacher. To illustrate, one may take an item that does *not* usually appear on a scale; let it be "Friendliness."

*The writer has developed some forms that are used in the school districts with which is is consulting.

Example: Suppose that "Friendliness" is a desired item on the scale. It appears as follows:

Friendliness: 1 2 3 4 5

The evaluator is supposed to check or circle a number. What does it mean to a teacher to say: "You are 3 out of 5 on friendliness"? To improve such a situation, another type of scale had been proposed by Burks (1971). Definitions or explanations of what is meant should appear on the scale. It may appear as follows:

Friendliness: Friendliness is the warmth and the sociability a person has in relation to students as well as to fellow teachers and administrators.

☐☐	☐☐	☐☐	☐☐	☐☐
Aloff	Approachable	Warm and Sociable	Extrovert (very sociable)	Excellent in establishing relations w/ other people

Such verbalization will mean something to the person to be evaluated. Teachers and administrators could come together and identify the important items. They may find "friendliness" to be a trivial point that should not appear on the list. The purpose of the two squares above each point is that a teacher can evaluate him/herself and the evaluator can use the same form to see whether they agree or disagree on the separate items. If disagreement occurs, then discussion takes place, which by its nature, will improve communications within the school. Both the teacher and the evaluator can agree upon as many items as they desire.

Concluding Remarks

In this article evaluation of a teacher is based upon the following:

1. Specific objectives and how to follow through.
2. Self-evaluation on items other than objectives.
3. An evaluator share his/her opinions on the same scale that the teacher used for self-evaluation. ☐

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